

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 SINGAP 02241 192318Z  
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 ISO-00 ACDA-12 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00  
PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01  
SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 /101 W  
-----049784 202320Z /41

R 190630Z MAY 78  
FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 291  
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK  
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA  
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR  
AMEMBASSY MANILA  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SINGAPORE 2241

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, BX, UK  
SUBJ: UK CONSTITUTIONAL TALKS WITH BRUNEI

1. JOHN HENNINGS, THE RECENTLY ARRIVED UK HIGH COMMISSIONER IN SINGAPORE, INFORMED ME ON MAY 18 THAT THE UK HOPES TO RESUME CONSTITUTIONAL TALKS WITH BRUNEI SOMETIME AROUND THE THIRD WEEK IN JUNE (HENNINGS HAD HEARD THIS FROM THE BRITISH HIGH COMMISSIONER IN BRUNEI WHO HAD JUST PASSED THROUGH SINGAPORE ENROUTE TO THE UK). HENNINGS STATED THAT UNDER THE PRESENT CONSTITUTIONAL RELATIONSHIP, THE UK ROLE IN BRUNEI CONTAINED OVERTONES OF COLONIALISM WHICH MADE IT VULNERABLE TO CRITICISM IN THE UN AND ELSEWHERE. IN THE FORTHCOMING TALKS IT WAS HOPED THAT THIS ANOMALY WOULD BE ENDED ONCE AND FOR ALL.

2. HENNINGS WENT ON TO SAY, HOWEVER, THAT THE UK  
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 SINGAP 02241 192318Z

INTENDED TO REPLACE THE CONSTITUTIONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH A PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP TREATY UNDER WHICH THE PRESENT BRITISH POSITION IN BRUNEI WOULD BE LEFT WITH VERY LITTLE CHANGE, ALTHOUGH AT THE SAME TIME BRUNEI WOULD APPEAR IN THE EYES OF THE WORLD AS AN INDEPENDENT COUNTRY. I ASKED IF THE BRITISH GURKHA BATTALION WOULD BE KEPT ON IN BRUNEI UNDER THE PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP

TREATY, AND HENNINGS REPLIED AFFIRMATIVELY. HE COULD NOT SAY HOW LONG THE GURKHAS WOULD REMAIN, BUT ASSUMED THAT IT WOULD BE FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE.

3. HENNINGS COMMENTED THAT THERE HAD BEEN SOME CONCERN IN LONDON OVER THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE SULTAN OF BRUNEI, AND MORE IMPORTANTLY THE SULTAN'S FATHER, MIGHT TRY TO CLING TO THE STATUS QUO FOR SOME MONTHS IN HOPES THAT THE CONSERVATIVES WOULD TAKE OVER AS A RESULT OF THE NEXT UK GENERAL ELECTIONS. HOWEVER, HENNINGS SAID, THE CONSERVATIVE SHADOW FOREIGN SECRETARY HAD ALREADY INFORMED THE SULTAN THAT UK POLICY TOWARD BRUNEI WAS BIPARTISAN, AND THAT NO CHANGE COULD BE EXPECTED UNDER THE CONSERVATIVES.

4. HENNINGS ALSO REFERRED TO THE LETTER WHICH HAD BEEN SENT BY THE SULTAN TO QUEEN ELIZABETH WHICH HAD IN EFFECT ASKED THE QUEEN TO DISREGARD THE ADVICE OF HER OWN MINISTERS REGARDING BRUNEI. THE QUEEN HAD SENT A REPLY MAKING IT PLAIN THAT NOTHING OF THIS SORT WOULD HAPPEN. HENNINGS OBSERVED ALSO THAT THE UK HAD MADE SOME THREATS ABOUT WHAT IT WOULD DO IF THE SULTAN REMAINED OBDURATE ON THE SUBJECT OF REPLACING THE PRESENT CONSTITUTIONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH A TREATY, BUT IN REALITY HAD NO INTENTION OF CARRYING OUT THESE THREATS. HE BELIEVED THERE WERE NOW GROUNDS FOR OPTIMISM AND THAT THE SULTAN AND THE SULTAN'S FATHER WOULD SEE  
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PAGE 03 SINGAP 02241 192318Z

THE LIGHT.

5. ACCORDING TO HENNINGS, PRIME MINISTER LEE KUAN YEW HAD BEEN MOST SUPPORTIVE OF THE UK POSITION WITH RESPECT TO BRUNEI. HE DID NOT ELABORATE.  
HOLDRIDGE

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## Message Attributes

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**Concepts:** CONSTITUTION, NEGOTIATIONS  
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**Decaption Date:** 01 jan 1960  
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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
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**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 20 Mar 2014  
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**Review Markings:**  
Sheryl P. Walter  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
20 Mar 2014  
**Markings:** Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014